

**Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, March 2, 2012**

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13. Technology directors asked to complete [PARCC Technology Readiness report](#) by March 16 – **Action Item**

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**Action Item Calendar**

**ASAP:** Distribute letters to families on graduation requirements (see below)

**Today** (March 2) : Deadline for principals to respond to [evaluation survey](#)

**Monday** (March 5): Application deadline for [Common Core](#) implementation grant

March 9: Districts to update data on [students with disabilities](#)

March 9: [Principal Roster](#) signoff due

March 9: [NECAP data](#) corrections due

March 9: Superintendents, principals [survey on evaluations](#) due  
March 9: Data-use needs-assessment [survey](#) due  
March 14: Deadline for [student-enrollment data](#) submission  
March 16: Deadline for resolving duplicate enrollments, signed [ADM forms](#)  
March 16: Technology directors to complete PARCC readiness report (see below)  
March 23: Annual [textbook lists](#) due  
April 13: Deadline for submitting to RIDE [district Teacher of the Year](#) selections  
June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

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***Notes from Commissioner Gist:***

**1. RIDE prepares letters on Diploma System for distribution to families – Action Item**

The heart of our mission as educators in Rhode Island is to ensure that our students graduate from high school ready for success. We have failed in this mission if our students graduate without the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in college and in challenging careers. As we all know, we have a long way to go before we can say that all of our graduates are ready for success.

As we work to ensure that our graduates are ready for success, we must provide students with the support that they need to meet the graduation requirements in our Diploma System. Beginning with the Class of 2014 (today's sophomore), students must, along with other requirements, attain at least the level of *partial* proficiency on the mathematics and reading assessments in order to graduate. Students who fail to attain partial proficiency in their junior year, must continue to receive additional instructional support. These students will have two opportunities to retake the state assessment in their senior year, and if they achieve partial proficiency or show growth, they will be eligible to graduate.

It is very important that all students and families understand what we expect students to accomplish in order to be eligible for graduation. To help get the word out to families across Rhode Island, I have written a set of letters for various audiences (such as parents of 10<sup>th</sup>-graders, parents of 8<sup>th</sup>-graders) explaining the expectations of our Diploma System. We have posted these letters on our website, and I ask that you download copies of the letters distribute the letters as soon as possible to families in your community. The letters are posted here:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/secondary/sec\\_regs.aspx#Student\\_and\\_Family\\_Letters](http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/secondary/sec_regs.aspx#Student_and_Family_Letters)

Spanish- and Portuguese-language versions of these letters will be on our website next week.

If there are other ways that I can help with your communication needs on this matter, please let me know.

**2. RIDE submits request for NCLB flexibility to U.S. Department of Education**

On Tuesday afternoon, we submitted to the U.S. Department of Education our request for flexibility regarding provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. In essence, we are seeking to redesign the way by which we:

- establish annual targets for schools;
- classify schools based student achievement;
- provide support and intervention to low-achieving schools.

We have proposed new systems for school classification and for support and intervention that:

- focus on achievement gaps;
- provide unique annual targets for each school, based on current achievement levels;
- hold more schools accountable for the performance of all student groups, including English Learners and students with disabilities;
- diagnose the specific shortcomings and achievements of each school; and
- enable low-achieving schools to select interventions that respond to their specific needs.

Our proposal will enable us to make much better use of the rich data that we have been collecting for many years. I want to assure you that our proposal should impose neither additional costs nor additional mandates on your LEA.

The U.S. Department of Education will review our request over the next month, and the Department may ask us to make some revisions to our request. We hope that the Department will approve the request as rapidly as possible because we intend to put this new system in place during the current year. I believe that the system we have proposed can be a model for accountability systems across the country and that the new system will help us to accelerate all of our schools toward greatness.

### **3. Regents approve new career-technical regulations**

Career-technical education is a vital part of our education system, but the regulations governing career-technical education had not been revised for more than 20 years. Yesterday afternoon (Thursday, March 1), after several months of discussion and review, the Board of Regents unanimously approved new regulations governing career-and-technical education.

The new regulations emphasize the need for a strong connection between career-technical education and the workforce and business community. Our goal is to ensure that all students have access to high-quality career-and-technical education.

The new regulations are designed to provide students exposure to the world of work, to offer students the opportunity to learn technical and career-based skills aligned with industry standards, and to enable students to earn credentials that will prepare them for postsecondary education and training programs or for entry into challenging careers.

Under the new regulations, students will have access to any approved career-preparation program in the state, not only to those in their district of residence.

I look forward to working with you and with your career-technical education directors to put these regulations into effect. I believe these new regulations will help us meet the diverse needs of our students and that the regulations will help us prepare students for careers in the areas most likely to expand and develop in the Rhode Island economy.

We have posted the new regulations on the our website, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/Docs/Enclosures/2012/Encl8a\\_CTE\\_Regulations.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/Docs/Enclosures/2012/Encl8a_CTE_Regulations.pdf)

#### **4. Educators engage in dialogue, discussion about the Common Core State Standards**

We are very fortunate that on Wednesday David Coleman, one of the lead authors of the Common Core State Standards, came to Rhode Island to share his views and to engage in dialogue with more than 300 teachers, school leaders, and other friends of education. It was great to see so many LEAs represented at his presentations.

As David said in his remarks, the Common Core State Standards:

- are internationally benchmarked;
- they align K-12 education with what students need to know and be able to do to be ready for college and careers; and
- they enable teachers and students to use their time more seriously and effectively, that is – not more standards, but standards that fewer and more clear.

Regarding the mathematics standards, David urged teachers (particularly those teaching kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) to be focused and disciplined:

“Focus on the math that matters most,” i.e., whole numbers, their operations, and the quantities they measure.

Regarding the literacy standards, he urged teachers to:

- build knowledge through context-rich information and nonfiction;
- encourage reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text; and
- engage in regular practice with complex texts and vocabulary, that is: “Make ‘evidence’ a watchword in your schools.”

His closing advice was: “Buy not materials, but buy time – and take time with texts.”

We are moving forward rapidly toward transition to the Common Core State Standards in 2013 and the PARCC assessments, which will be based on the Common Core, in 2014. To date, we have worked with more than 4,000 educators, representing all LEAs, in study of the Common Core State Standards. It was great to see at the events on Wednesday that teachers and school leaders are knowledgeable, engaged, and inquisitive about the Common Core and about how

these new standards will affect classroom instruction and how they will improve teaching and learning.

Many people have asked for a one-page set of talking points to summarize some of the major points David made during his presentations. We have developed these points and posted them on our website, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/CommonCore/Talking\\_Points\\_about\\_the\\_CCS\\_S.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/CommonCore/Talking_Points_about_the_CCS_S.pdf)

Also, we will be posting a video that summarizes all three presentations so that those who weren't able to attend the presentations can get a sense of what we heard.

We will certainly learn from David's insights as we continue to work with educators across the state to prepare for transition to the Common Core.

***From RIDE:***

**5. NimbleTools® will be available during the spring 2012 NECAP Science assessment**

Please see the following message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE is pleased to announce that NimbleTools will once again be available for those students in grades 4, 8, and 11 who have needs for access supports that can be met by using online tools to take the spring 2012 NECAP Science assessment.

NimbleTools provides universal access to test content by embedding accessibility and accommodation tools directly into the items as they are presented to students online. Accommodation and access tools are assigned for each student by his or her teacher, based on the needs of the student. Examples of tools available through the NimbleTools software include: read-aloud testing administered discretely through headphones, talking science-reference tools, multiple levels of visual magnification, background calming music, masking of parts of the screen to reduce visual overload, color overlays, "one-item at a time" presentation, and other tools that give students a sense of support and individual control during the test-taking experience.

All participating schools will have additional resources available to help educators make more informed decisions about which access tools should be assigned to students.

Please visit the project website at [www.nimbletools.com/necap/schools](http://www.nimbletools.com/necap/schools) to view an accessibility animation, updated orientation files, and new practice tests.

During the 2012 NECAP Science assessment administration, survey data will also be collected from all participating teachers who assign NimbleTools accommodations and from their students regarding decision-making processes in access-tool assignment and use. Due to required consent issues, these surveys will be paper-based and will be mailed to participating schools. Please note that this is federally funded research and, as

such, it is very important that a concerted effort is made to help facilitate a good survey response rate by encouraging parental consent for students to complete this survey.

If you are interested in allowing students in your district to use NimbleTools to take the grade 4, 8, or 11 NECAP Science assessment, please have schools register for the 15-minute WebEx session that is *required for school participation*, at:

<http://iregister.measuredprogress.org>.

There are two online training sessions available: **March 27**, at 9 a.m. and **March 28**, at 2 p.m.

After attending a WebEx session, participating schools will be sent the necessary information to prepare for testing, to register participating students, and to assign tools for students to use during the test administration.

For more information on NimbleTools, please e-mail [saas@measuredprogress.org](mailto:saas@measuredprogress.org) or call (603) 749-9102 Ext. 3660 or Ext. 3667. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Tucker-Seeley, at [kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov](mailto:kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov), or 222-8494.

**6. LEAs, principals asked to complete surveys on data use by March 9, RSVP to focus groups – Action Item**

Please see the following announcement from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

Using Race to the Top funds, RIDE, along with and our vendor Wireless Generation, will be providing a year-long, job-embedded professional-development series on the use of data to drive instruction.

To ensure that the program best meets the needs of *all* schools, we ask that every LEA representative and building principal complete the survey(s) e-mailed on February 27.

If these have not yet been completed, please do so by Friday, **March 9**.

For LEAs:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Data\\_Use\\_LEA](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Data_Use_LEA)

For principals:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Collaborative\\_Structures](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Collaborative_Structures)  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Data\\_Use\\_Schools](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Data_Use_Schools)

To gain additional feedback on the professional-development series, RIDE and Wireless Generation will hold regional focus groups at the following times and locations:

*Wednesday, March 14*

9 - 11:00 a.m. – Northern Rhode Island Collaborative  
640 George Washington Highway  
Lincoln 02865

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. – East Bay Educational Collaborative  
317 Market St.  
Warren 02885

*Thursday, March 15*

9 -11 a.m. – University of Rhode Island  
Providence Campus, Room 242  
255 Westminster St./80 Washington St.  
Providence 02903

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. – Courthouse Center for the Arts, Annex Building  
3481 Kingston Rd.  
West Kingston 02892

LEA representatives and principals, regardless of current data-use experience, are invited to participate. Please e-mail [Lindsay.Wepman@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Lindsay.Wepman@ride.ri.gov) with questions or to RSVP regarding any one of the sessions.

## **7. Certification changes allow LEAs greater flexibility in hiring, assignments**

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

With the implementation of the new certification regulations on January 1, several changes have gone in to effect regarding Middle Grades certification to allow LEAs greater flexibility in the hiring and assignment of educators. LEAs *are no longer required* to hire and assign only those educators with Middle Grades certificates to teach in schools identified as middle schools. As of January 1, educators can teach in any grade level for which they are certified, regardless of the type and structure of the school. As such, Elementary Teachers, Grades 1 through 6, *are eligible* to teach at any grade level 1 through 6, including grades 5 and 6 in a middle school. Secondary Teachers, Grades 7 through 12, *are eligible* to teach their content area at any grade level 7 through 12, including grades 7 and 8 in a middle school. Educators who hold the Middle Grades certificate in a content area, whether the Middle Grades Elementary Extension added to an Elementary certificate or the Middle Grades Secondary Extension added to a Secondary content certificate, *are eligible* to teach grades 5 through 8 in their content area in addition to their elementary- and secondary-grades eligibility.

One additional change that has occurred regarding Middle Grades certification is that RIDE now offers a stand-alone Middle Grades certificate in a specific content area (e.g., English, mathematics, science). An educator holding this certificate *is eligible* to teach grades 5 through 8 in their content area in any school setting. Though Rhode Island does not currently have preparation programs designed to provide this training, several states do, and RIDE has already begun to issue these certificates.

Note that LEAs *may continue* to implement local policies and practices to hire and assign only Middle School certified educators to middle schools. Note also that RIDE recommends that Elementary Teachers who teach in grades 5 and 6 in middle schools serve as generalists if they have not had preparation to serve as content specialists.

Please direct any questions to Andre Audette ([andre.audette@ride.ri.gov](mailto:andre.audette@ride.ri.gov), 222-5103), in the Office of Educator Quality and Certification.

**8. LEAs asked to review Instructional Management System training plan, register personnel for training**

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The statewide Instructional Management Systems (IMS) will be launched in September.

The IMS will allow educators to:

- align and manage curriculum, instruction, and assessments to support student achievement;
- access relevant and timely visual reporting of assessment and other data (“dashboards”) for immediate student, class, school, and district needs;
- query data to determine areas of student strengths and needs while being able to track student progress;
- access professional-development modules;
- fully manage implementation plans and track student progress toward goals through an RTI management module; and
- design, distribute, and score assessments (will not include the PARCC or RIAA assessments).

To prepare for deployment of the system, LEAs must review the IMS training plan carefully, which will assist you in determining your readiness to deploy the system, beginning to develop a plan for deployment, and selecting personnel to register for training. Training will begin at the end of the month.

The IMS Training Plan is posted, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/DOCS/IMS/IMS\\_Training\\_Plan\\_Guidance\\_for\\_LEAs\\_2-23-2012.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/DOCS/IMS/IMS_Training_Plan_Guidance_for_LEAs_2-23-2012.pdf).

Any questions may be directed to Bob Measel ([robert.measel@ride.ri.gov](mailto:robert.measel@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8480) or Heather Heineke ([heather.heineke@ride.ri.gov](mailto:heather.heineke@ride.ri.gov) to 222-8493).

**9. RIDE provides resource guide for reviewing foreign transcripts from newly enrolled students**



Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE has developed a reference guide that LEAs may use when reviewing foreign transcripts for students newly enrolling from other countries. This document was adapted from guidance produced by the Office of Youth Development and School-Community Services of the New York City Department of Education.

The document contains recommended practices for reviewing transcripts; basic, standardized information on education systems in more than 70 countries; and reference material and contact information for agencies that you may contact for more information or support.

Please ensure that the educators who are responsible for transcript review within your schools are made aware of this document. It is posted on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/ForeignTranscriptReview.aspx>

Any questions may be directed to Bob Measel ([robert.measel@ride.ri.gov](mailto:robert.measel@ride.ri.gov) - 222-8480).

**10. SurveyWorks parent survey participation rate doubled; student, teacher/staff, administrator surveys open through March 15**

Please see the following message from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

The SurveyWorks parent survey is closing tomorrow. As the last few surveys come in, we are very pleased to announce that the statewide participation rate of parents doubled from last year. We are especially pleased that rates in many of our urban schools increased dramatically. We deeply appreciate the efforts of you and everyone involved in making this happen, and we would like to acknowledge The Learning Community Charter School, the Matunuck School, the Met, and the Segue Institute for Learning for achieving the highest rates in the state.

As you may be aware, the student, teacher/staff, and administrator surveys are open through March 15. We now ask your assistance in turning attention to these surveys. In particular, please encourage your teachers and instructional staff to complete their surveys in order to provide a more complete picture of the learning environment in your schools.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jan Mermin, at [Jan.Mermin@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Jan.Mermin@ride.ri.gov) or 222-4710. Thank you again for your help with these surveys.

**11. RIDE to hold webinar for LEAs on professional-development planning**

Please see this notice from our Division of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness:

We will be hosting a webinar for LEA Leadership Teams on Tuesday, **March 13**, from 11 a.m. to 1.p.m., to discuss professional-development planning related to our new initiatives on Interim Assessments, Formative Assessments, Data Use, Instructional Management System, and other topics. As you know, in addition to the professional development associated with Educator Evaluation and Study of the Standards, there is additional training associated with the new technology-based systems that we are about to launch. You may review a summary of the professional development at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/DOCS/RTTT/RTTT\\_PD\\_2-7-12-DRAFT.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/DOCS/RTTT/RTTT_PD_2-7-12-DRAFT.pdf)

We invite you to assemble your leadership team to participate in the webinar together so that you can begin to think about when you would like to participate, how you would like to shape it to meet the needs of your LEA, and who should be part of each training. The webinar is planned so that we will take a break after the beginning presentation in order for you to identify questions and discuss how your LEA might organize itself over the next couple of years in response to the professional-development offerings.

The structure of the webinar will be as follows:

- 11 – 11:45 a.m.: Presentation of the professional development with options to consider at the local level
- 11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Sign off the webinar to allow for discussion and planning among the LEA Leadership Team
- 12:30 – 1:00 p.m.: Reconnect to answer questions and share ideas

Please contact Melissa Cabral, at [Melissa.cabral@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Melissa.cabral@ride.ri.gov), to indicate whether you will be participating in this webinar. We will send all participants dial-in information upon registration. Please call Mary Ann Snider (222-8492) if you have any questions about the webinar.

## **12. Roster Verification for principals due Friday, March 9 – Action Item**

Please see this notice from our Division of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness:

Roster Verification is the process through which teachers identified as contributing educators in ELA or math to students in grades 3 through 7 and the school principals verify which students are in which teachers' classes. This process is critical in ensuring the accuracy of teacher-course-student data, which will be used in the new Instructional Management System, Educator Performance and Support System, and Growth Model data systems being developed with funding from Race to the Top.

Roster Verification for teachers took place from February 8 through February 17; *85.35 percent of 3,508 educators verified and signed off on their rosters!* We want to thank teachers, principals, and superintendents for a very successful roster-verification process. East Greenwich, Glocester, Jamestown, Lincoln, Little Compton, Narragansett, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Tiverton, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, the

Compass School, the Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District all reached 100 percent.

Roster Verification for principals began on Wednesday and must be completed by **March 9**. Principals must review and sign off on their school rosters during this period. RIDE has developed training materials, which are available at:

[www.ride.ri.gov/29](http://www.ride.ri.gov/29).

If a principal needs an extension on this deadline, please have them e-mail [rosterverification@ride.ri.gov](mailto:rosterverification@ride.ri.gov) with their request.

Roster verification for principals is available through the eRide portal, at [www.eride.ri.gov](http://www.eride.ri.gov). A principal must use their eRide log-in information to access this site. Password help is available online at:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/users/PasswordRetrieve.asp>.

If a principal does not have an eRide account, he or she may contact their district data manager, who will be able to create an account for them.

**13. Technology directors asked to complete PARCC Technology Readiness report by March 16 – Action Item**

Please see the following message from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

A PARCC Readiness Assessment Tool User Spreadsheet has been posted on the RIDE website on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) page:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/PARCC.aspx> (see the Resources tab)

and on the Transition to the Common Core page:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx> (see the PARCC tab).

District Technology Directors should complete this form by **March 16** and identify all staff who will be conducting the readiness assessment in schools. Once completed, this form should be e-mailed to Michael Ferry, at [Michael.Ferry@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Michael.Ferry@ride.ri.gov).

PARCC has contracted with Pearson to develop a Technology Readiness Tool (TRT) to support states as they plan the transition to next-generation assessments that will be launched beginning in the 2014-15 school year. Through a combination of detected and submitted data, this new open-source tool will help schools evaluate their current capacity and compare it with the technology that will be needed to administer new online assessments. The TRT focuses on four areas of capacity: devices, device-to-tester ratio, network infrastructure, and personnel.

In support of this effort, Michael Ferry, the RIDE Knowledge Officer, has been named as State Readiness Coordinator (SRC). He will serve as a point of contact for LEAs, and he will coordinate with local and state teams working on assessments and technology.

The TRT will collect data during two windows each year (spring and fall) through 2014. The first of six data-collection windows will be April 2 to June 8. Given the scale of planning for, communicating about, and implementing the TRT, RIDE has elected to pilot the administration of the tool two weeks prior to making the tool available to the full range of schools. Additional strategies for TRT roll-out are available via [Assess4Ed.net](http://Assess4Ed.net), an online community operated by the State Educational Technology Directors Association to support technology leaders in transitioning to next-generation assessments. There they will find a Rhode Island Group with a wiki and other communication tools used during the collection.

The goal of the first window is to collect baseline data, including the number and specifications of devices currently in schools. In the first data-collection window, schools' current devices will be measured against proposed minimum hardware specifications to establish a baseline inventory. Evaluating technology readiness will be an iterative process, and as more information is known about the PARCC technology architecture, the hardware specifications will be updated in the TRT for use in future data-collection windows. State SRCs will communicate with district personnel to ensure that necessary information is collected and updated in each data-collection window.

PARCC has released a document with concerns relative to the use of iPads for testing. Although it is early in the process and these issues may be eliminated, LEAs should consider these concerns when making device purchases. Follow this link to view the document:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/DataWorks/documents/PARCC iPad concerns.doc](http://www.ride.ri.gov/DataWorks/documents/PARCC_iPad_concerns.doc)

Thank you for your efforts in supporting the successful collection of these data. We hope that the TRT represents a valuable opportunity for your schools to gather useful information about technology readiness that can inform your planning and decision-making around the new assessments.

An FAQ document has been posted, at:

[http://www.assess4ed.net/sites/default/files/frequently\\_asked\\_questions\\_02162012.pdf](http://www.assess4ed.net/sites/default/files/frequently_asked_questions_02162012.pdf).

Questions can also be directed to [Michael.Ferry@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Michael.Ferry@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8258.

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>